

Lucas Hofstatter

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My name is Lucas Hofstatter. I am a Team Leader and direct-care provider at FOCUS Alternative Learning Center, where I began ten years ago as a client after being formally diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder and have since worked my way into the ranks of our staff. FOCUS is an extended-day milieu therapy program that specializes in the treatment of children and young adults on the Autism Spectrum; indeed, working with this organization both as a client and a staff member has afforded me a wealth of opportunities over the years to learn the skills I've needed in order to survive in the world. Today, at the age of twenty-two, I am proud to stand before those assembled as an example of the success that can be achieved with proper interventions and plenty of personal effort.

However, in recent years I've become painfully aware of just how little exists in Connecticut for individuals like myself in terms of supportive services after the ages of eighteen and twenty-one years; interventions for younger persons have been making encouraging progress of late, but it seems to me that the system simply abandons us after the cutoff ages, abruptly discontinuing services and leaving bereft those in need.

The pilot program we are here to discuss was intended to put in motion a process of reform that would ultimately rectify this egregious oversight. While itself not meant as a panacea for Connecticut's services deficit, this pilot demonstrates that with state funds, economical and effective interventions are possible for those who no longer meet the current system's age requirements. The program has seen great success in the New Haven area, and now it is time for us to take the next step of the reform process.

Connecticut is not an easy place to live for adults on the Spectrum, even for high-functioning individuals like myself who have achieved higher levels of success via interventions at earlier ages. I currently hold a full-time job, working forty hours a week or more, yet the prohibitively exorbitant costs of living and the lack of affordable housing have utterly thwarted my searches for my own lodging. I possess all of the skills I need in order to live on my own, yet I still live with my parents because my own income is simply insufficient to afford even the least expensive of apartments in the least desirable of neighborhoods. I want only independence, but within the confines and shortcomings of our state's current insurance networks and government-funded interventions, independence remains out of my reach.

Let's change that... not just for me, but all the other young adults in Connecticut who would be able to lead healthier, more meaningful lives and contribute far more to the state as successful, taxpaying citizens with the simple provision of some very basic protections.

Thank you.